

# Questions from a New Actor

By Charlie Bowles

Last year I had occasion to become a de facto online advisor to a young man who was bitten by a passion to become an actor, an artist of free expression, in a distant country where training is sparse, and acting is more regimented. But this young man searched the teachings of Michael Chekhov and began to read and study on his own. Through my presence on the [www.Chekhov.net](http://www.Chekhov.net) website, he reached out to me. I tried to put him into several other teachers of our NMCA Chekhov pedagogy, but he persisted in reaching out to me with questions.

These questions were deceptively simple in their initial form, and yet on further review, they could become very complex. Sometimes it takes a very simple-minded person (and I do not mean dumb here, but rather rudimentary in understanding to create the questions that cause one to have to think hard about a proper answer) to create a useful dialog.

We have carried this dialog out for over a year and I find his questions a mix of basic Chekhov understanding and practical application to real-world situations, whether on-stage or on a film set. So, these questions and their answers are presented here in hopes that they may offer useful consideration to others.

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On Mon, Feb 5, 2018 at 8:45 AM

Hello, sir, how are you? Today my question is -"For any film. which type of technical knowledge one actor should have"?

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I am going to give you three basic answers to this question.

1. In every endeavor of life, regardless of what industry you work in, the more technical knowledge you learn about that industry, the better you will be able to work in it.
2. If you are an actor in the film industry, you do not have to know everything. In such a highly technical industry, there will almost always be technicians and experts there who do know the technical details, and so your main requirement is to understand them. You need to know how to talk to them and how to understand what they are explaining to you.
3. MOST IMPORTANTLY, as an actor, you need to know how to be DIRECTED, how to understand the commands and suggestions your director is giving you. SO, you should begin with learning and understanding the basic process of film making and make sure you understand the basic terms you will hear on a film set. When you are acting on film, your audience are the cameras, so you need to be aware of them and how they may be looking at you.

These suggestions depend on who you are working with on the film. Is the director experienced and technically knowledgeable in the art of film making? Are there technicians working the cameras and lights and sounds who have all that technical knowledge and experience you can depend on. If so, then you can work effectively with less or little technical knowledge. If not, then you may need to know more about it so you can add your own technical expertise to the film. But, of course, if you find yourself doing this, you may shift into being a director or technician. SO, how much you need to know is based on how much more you want to do.

There are several good basic film-making courses you can take on the internet. Search for them. Some are a bit more costly. Some are inexpensive. AND you can get a whole lot of basic knowledge by watching free videos on YouTube about film making. You do not need to go to film school unless you want to really decide to become a film maker yourself.

There are many good film actors who get by on a set with little or no technical knowledge.

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On Sat, Mar 3, 2018 at 10:42 PM,

While acting...

Actor becomes character?

Actor controls character?

Which one is right and why?

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This can either be a very complex answer or a simple one, depending on why you are asking the questions. I will start with the simple one.

If you are still studying Michael Chekhov's teachings, then you know that he teaches that we use our imaginations for as much as we can BEFORE we use thinking, intellectual analysis. So, you are playing an imaginary character. Even if you are playing a character from history, you the actor are playing YOUR imaginary version of that character, not the real one. So the characters you play come from within you, or we teach in our classes they come from the sphere of imagination. Either way, the character comes from your thinking, BUT IT IS NOT YOU. Unless you are playing yourself for some reason.

So, why are you playing any character? Because you are telling a story, or helping to tell a story. And this character in some way helps you to tell this story. So you create the character, which means that you use a variety of techniques to imagine how he looks, how he talks and walks and does the things he has to do in the story, and how he responds to others. Is he a higher social level (caste?) to the other characters, or lower? What does he want to accomplish in this story? These answers give you, the actor, a set of playable characteristics you can use to create that character on stage (or on film). You want this character to NOT be you. You want it to be really interesting, probably much more dramatic and unstable than you are. So, in some ways, the character is like a puppet that you control. As the actor, you can imagine that you can float above the character with one part of your brain and control the actions of the character. This was what Chekhov talked about when he described being "the OTHER" - watching the character come to life.

You, as the character live in the environment of the story. You, as the actor, lives in the environment of the stage or set. As the actor, you must not only embody the actions of your character in the story circumstances, say the dialog, do the stage actions, BUT you also must pay attention to other actors, stage directions, ensure you safety, radiate and receive energy from the audience, and generally be aware of what the director wants from you. This is the split personality that Chekhov describes when he talks about being the OTHER. He is the aware and in-control actor AND the character who is only aware of the story.

SO, you can imagine that you are controlling the character, because you created it from your imagination, and you are directing it to walk and talk and do things. (YOU DO NOT HAVE TO MAKE HIM FEEL ANYTHING. Only the audience needs to feel something, and they apply their own feelings to what they see you do. SO, you do not have to dig deep into your painful past to find emotions to play. Only you will feel those.)

SO, the simple answer is to not worry about it. Just use your imagination tools to create in your mind and on your body the characteristics of the character you imagine and pretend to be that character to tell that story.

There's a much more complex answer that gets into all the real arguments between the various forms of actor training programs, but I will not go into those here. What I described above is what you need to do the things an actor needs to do.

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On Fri, Mar 9, 2018 at 11:19 AM,

Sir how to do ROPE DANCE EXERCISE? Do we need to imagine it in our working centre and dance the rope or we have to put real rope there?

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I don't know where you got this term. I don't know of any exercise called ROPE DANCE in the Chekhov teachings or any other acting method. It is possible it comes from a particular teacher's improvisation teaching games. We do not do this in our workshops. The only thing I am aware of is rope dancing as an art form, like aerial silks, where one climbs up the rope and "dances" up on the rope. It is quite beautiful to watch.

BUT you are asking a question about imagination, so I will answer that.

The answer is YES. In our workshops, when you ask a question of THIS THING OR THAT THING, the answer is YES. Both are possible. If you have a rope, dance with it. Imagine it as anything you want. It can be a mate or an animal or a

rope you want to dance with. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A ROPE, then imagine the rope. You can do ANYTHING when you use your imagination and that is the great power of imagination. There are NO limits. BUT remember that the audience or class or teacher cannot see what you are imagining. They only see your physical action with whatever you are imagining.

Michael Chekhov was never against doing real things with real people in real circumstances. BUT he wants you to come at those things through your imagination first, because there is so much more to act with in your imagination than there is in the physical world. So, you are completely unlimited in your acting choices and can create your performance in many, many ways. You can even do the same performance every night or in multiple camera-takes and imagine them in different ways each time. And your performance will change each time in subtle, more interesting ways.

So always begin with imagination, then add reality. Imagine a rope dance in as many ways as you can and then, when you have a rope, IF you ever have a rope, then your dance will be more creative and interesting to the audience.

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On Wed, Apr 11, 2018 at 12:19 AM,  
Sir in future I want to work in films.

For this which is best acting institute or school in Asia.? Is there any school in Russia where I can learn chekhov's tools also? What will be the fee in Chekhov's school?

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I do not know what film schools are in Asia or Russia. You should be able to search those online. Just do your homework about what they offer and what they require of you.

If you go to Chekhov schools in the European area, then your travel costs will be less. I do not know their costs. They also are not strictly film schools. They teach Chekhov tools to actors and directors in that area. IF you came to America, and you know what the travel costs might be for that, the costs of our 1-week intensive program is about \$800 (USD\$) in tuition and we keep our housing cost very low. In our Summer training program in Las Cruces New Mexico USA, which happens in the first week of June, we stay in the college dormitory and that only costs about \$250 for the whole week. During that week, we teach EVERY Chekhov tool that Michael Chekhov developed, plus some others our professional master teachers (with lots of stage and film credits) have also developed. One of those evenings is to learn how to do auditions, and we focus a lot of film auditions. In addition to learning and practicing each Chekhov tool, you learn to do improvisation games using each tool AND you apply that tool to doing a scene with a scene partner. At the end of the week, we perform our scenes in front of a large audience, and that one in New Mexico sometimes gets a pretty big audience.

Our other major training week is during our New Years week and that is held in Gainesville Florida USA at the University of Florida. It's the same costs and the same week-long program.

Of course, coming to America requires a bunch of travel VISA work, and I probably do not have to remind you that America is strict on travel VISAs these days because our current government is very anti-immigration. We had a student from India who submitted for a travel VISA at the last minute, and then it got rejected by the US Embassy, mostly because there was no one in America who could validate her, such as grandparents or something. Our school will provide entrance information you could use for the VISA application, but it did not help with the young girl who applied last year. SO, I can imagine that getting VISAs for travel to Europe would be much easier. They have regular classes in Germany and England/Scotland/Ireland.

You know that Russia has a strong history of actor training, so I know they have very strong schools in Moscow. But I do not know anything about their requirements or costs.

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On Mon, Aug 13, 2018 at 3:11 AM,

What is rhythm and tempo? How to get rhythm in body? How rhythm is connected to our emotions?

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If you go to this link and put your mouse over the boxes (or click on the boxes on your phone, you will see a lot of definitions and explanations for the different tools on the chart).

Tempo is simply speed - How fast do you do things? Whether it is moving through space or thinking or doing things on stage or film, there is a speed you do them with. It could be fast or slow or in-between. We teach our students to create a speed scale that means something to them. It could be 1-7 or 1-10 or anything that lets you create different speeds you could choose during an action. Make the middle number your normal speed of life, how fast do you normally walk when you're not in a hurry? Then speeds above and below that can be accentuated to create interesting differences in your movement. We suggest that you practice all movements and physical actions at different speeds to find what feels right. There are people (and characters) who are naturally slow and others who are fast. Watch people walk around you. Listen to them talk. Pay attention to how people think (you may feel that when they are talking or when they respond to you). Some are very quick thinking and others are slow. Most of us are somewhere in between. But the important thing about this with the Chekhov tools is that it allows you to choose a wide variety of characteristics for the character you are playing. And you can simply imagine the speed they might operate in to decide that.

Rhythm is related to speed, but really talks about the starting, stopping and pausing that happens within a movement. There are 5 archetypal rhythms if you study nature. They are archetypal because they just occur naturally throughout nature without any learning or studying or effort.

1. Legato - is smooth with a single start, few pauses, and a single stop. Think of slow, ritual, spiritual music you have heard. It flows easily.
2. Lyrical - is truly musical. It tends to be like legato but also has pauses and smooth starts and stops. You might hear this in minuets or classical ballet. It tends to tell a story and has great emotional feel to it.
3. Staccato - has elements of legato and lyrical, but it has sudden starts and stops and almost jerks around a bit, but it's still controlled. A lot of modern music, especially pop electronic music is staccato, but it exists in all music and if you watch closely, you will see nature, animals and even people who tend to have staccato as a major part of their lives. The main tendency is chopiness.
4. Chaos - this rhythm combines elements of legato, lyrical and staccato, but is extreme with all of them and generally feels like it is out-of-control. Newer music that is jarring to your ear or seems to make you nervous or anxious is chaotic.
5. Stillness - yes, completely total silence and stillness, the state of no movement or action, is a rhythm. Search nature. Watch people around you. You will see people and things that find silence and inaction as one of their primary tools. In your part of the world, I assume you have contacted spiritual men, a pujari or other people of great wisdom. They are not dead. They do have character and personality and they impart wisdom and knowledge, but they do this with great pauses or even silence.

Each of these rhythms interact and interplay with the others. True movement in life has parts of all of these, usually balanced together, but an interesting character in a story may have one of these to an extreme. And it's easy for you to find one of these, overplay it and create a character that looks like no one else (and does not look like you).

Also, temp and rhythm interact. Each of these 5 rhythms can be acted at any of the speeds on your speed scale. Legato at a speed of 7, for instance, may look like speed skaters on a track. Chaos played at a speed of 2 may look like slow-motion craziness. There is no perfect speed or rhythm. Just find something that looks and feels interesting.

Finally, we talk in more advanced settings about inner and outer speeds and rhythms. You can separate how you move on the outside (visible to others) to how you imagine you are moving inside your head. You can have a lyrical action at a speed of 5 on the outside, so that everyone thinks you are feeling calm and easy but have a chaotic speed 7 on the inside. That creates a sense in the audience that something strange is lurking beneath your skin -- your inside demeanor does not match your outer look. And this creates tension in a character and a scene.

Audience (and the camera) can feel all these subtle differences in speed and rhythm. So, they give you great power in choosing your character's personality and conflict.

A beat is an old term used by most other actor training systems that comes from Stanislavski's use of it at the Moscow Art Theater. It is basically a moment in the script where something happens, characters come in or go out or something causes your character to do something. Often a beat is marked by a pause. It essentially breaks down the script (and story) into the smallest atom. And these atoms of text are subjective - it might be obvious in the text, but it is often not and is something the director will point out to you.

In Chekhov work, we know about beats, but they aren't too important to us. We do mark anytime something in the text or directions cause an atmosphere change. That might be when a major character enters or exits. Or it might be when something in the flow of the story happens (like a major event) that affects everyone in the play. To use this, you need to understand overall and personal atmospheres, so go back to Joe Herrera's videos to learn more about atmospheres.

Whether you use beats or events (which is what we call climaxes, which we count 9 in a play or film of any length), it's important because it provides the interesting moments in the story. The audience sees these beats or atmosphere changes as important signposts in the story. And they help you as the actor to know where you are and how to change your character's "feelings" or actions because of it.

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On Wed, Aug 22, 2018 at 2:24 AM,  
Sir this time i have very simple question How to internalize text?  
After getting script we to memorize the text? Or there are other techniques to internalize text?

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I'm not sure what you mean by "internalize text." Do you mean memorize it? Or are you talking about making the text your own SO that you can remember it better and know how to play the character who is saying it? In either case, your question is not so simple.

Chekhov taught that the best way to memorize the script is in reverse. Start with the last lines or paragraph and memorize that. Once you can easily say that without referring to a script, move to the line or paragraph (or speech) in front of that. Work on that, and then be able to say that AND the last lines/paragraph without looking at a script. Then keep moving forward, adding a line or paragraph each time until you have the whole script memorized. If you ever have to look back at the script, return to the process. This doesn't all have to be done right up front, though it will help you to "get up on your feet and move and act without having to carry and refer to a script."

I will tell you that I always start out memory work by WRITING and SAYING the text at the same time. This exercises both the vocal and hearing parts of my brain, but also the visual and touch sensory parts. By exercising more of the brain, it is primed to embed the text into more association areas of the brain and make it easier to remember.

NOW on the other hand, internalizing the text is more about making it meaningful for you, the actor. What do the words mean, both to the character, to the playwright/screenwriter, the director, and to you the actor? Find real meaning for those words in your own psyche and background. If you don't know what a word means, look it up. Ask others. In a play the words are important - the playwright spends years crafting those words to mean something critical to the story. So make sure YOU know what they mean and then make them mean something to you.

Beyond that, in Chekhov, we spend much more time working on the imagination of what our character looks like, how they walk and hold themselves, how they talk, and how they would do the actions that gets them what they want in the scene. The text kind of falls in place. If you know what your character wants in the scene, who they can get it from, and who is trying to stop them from getting it, then the text will make more sense and you will find the "text" even if it's not exactly what is written. Strive for being true to the text. But don't be enslaved by it.

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On Thu, Aug 23, 2018 at 9:07 AM,

In one book I read that - "you can give your character one secret in any scene or through the play. If you have secret your character will be more 3 dimensional more unpredictable and more human" what are the others things actor can internalize just like secret (apart from PG) so character will be more unpredictable and more human.?

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What gives a character are physical and observable characteristics or features that look interesting to an audience. There are many, many of those and finding them is what our training workshops, and what Chekhov's tools, are for. But always remember that the audience can only see what they can see with their eyes. They cannot see what you think or what you feel UNLESS those things come out physically on stage. You might FEEL fear, which really is a secret inside your head, but if you somehow act that fear out with your face or body, the audience will never know it. SO, the idea of "holding a secret through the play," will do nothing for the audience unless you somehow act out physically what that secret means. HOWEVER, a secret can create tension inside of you and you may not be able to hide it - it might come out in your actions.

Another way to look at having a secret is to say that you must have an objective, that is, something you really must get or achieve. And that often is secret until the audience figures it out through your repeated attempts. IF you are blocked from getting that objective in every scene, until you finally do get it or finally fail to get it, then the internal psychological drive inside your character (which is inside your own imagination) to get that objective can make you act physically in certain ways that the audience can then see. BUT remember always, the audience never knows what you are thinking unless you verbally tell them - so they will interpret what they see you do through their own beliefs and thoughts.

YOU cannot make the audience feel anything. They will feel what they feel because of what they interpret in what you are doing. This is a major difference in what Chekhov teaches and what other actor training systems teach.

SO, if you want to create a secret (an internal thought that you do not ever reveal) and you let that secret drive your character to do physical things in your scenes that the audience can see, then you can make your character more interesting and fun to watch. You can also do that through several other Chekhov tools. In fact, all of them are tools that help you imagine the characteristics of your character, especially if they are different from your own personal characteristics. Every tool on our Chart of Inspired Actions opens your imagination to try out and then practice those different characteristics.

AND, in the middle of a scene or play, IF you are not inspired by something to play the scene, you can use one of the tools to help you quickly get through that scene. That is the PG, especially if you are taught the right way to do it, which is a movement sequence with your beginning, middle and ending positions. Done right, you can do this exercise immediately before you go on-stage or in front of the camera and it will put into your bones, meaning you don't have to think about it, what that scene means to you. You might even mirror small pieces of that movement sequence into your on-stage character's actions. BUT you would never in a real scene DO that PG full out. It is, like most of the tools and like most of the Stanislavsky method, a practice tool, not a performance tool.

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On Mon, Aug 27, 2018 at 10:51 PM,

Sir tell me about pause. I have read somewhere that pause can be two types 1) logical pause 2) psychological pause. What does Chekhov say about pause?

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The pause is an important part of any dramatic action. We use it for two reasons. One is to pause before a dramatic moment to build audience suspense for what will come next. The other is to pause after a dramatic event to give the audience time to absorb, reflect and internalize what has just happened. This refers to events, but can also be a phrase, a line, or even a dramatic word. If you listen to comedians, there will almost always be a quick pause just before the punch line, which raises audience tension for a moment and then brings them down with the punch line. That makes it funnier. You do not have to make a big deal of it. It doesn't rise to the level of filling pages of rhetoric about it. Just find the most

important moments in a scene or line and decide whether you want to build tension before it or allow its impact to go deeper after it. In our workshop scene work, we expect scene partners and monologues to have at least one important pause. The timing is variable. A short pause builds a little tension. A long pause builds a lot of tension. But if it's too long you lose or confuse the audience. A 1-2 count is probably all you need unless it's like the most important event or moment in the play and then you may only have a 4-5 count.

Try it, with different moments and different times. Try it both before and after to feel the effect.

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On Sun, Sep 2, 2018 at 1:45 AM,

Sir ...it will be very helpful for me if you send me old notes or script or something like that where you or any Student or teacher have breakdown the script. .into beats, events, objectives ,super objectives, PG, actions etc....it will be very very helpful for me sir.

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This is a complicated subject that may fill a large notebook. And each time a director or actor does it, it changes, because the motivations for doing the play/film/role change. And every director or actor can do this and be completely different from each other. There's not a single right way to analyze a script. In our training we do not start with analysis. We start with a tool we developed called SynthAnalysis. This is a tool that came from multiple ideas by different teachers and our own development. It makes maximum use of Chekhov's imagination techniques to discover through ensemble improv the themes, ideas, objectives, super-objectives, PG's, scene events (including climaxes) and atmospheres. Only then might we look a bit more at beats and other breakdowns in the script. We might then look at notes about what's in the script. But it all is based on our own idea of what the play/film is about. As an actor, you should be part of the ensemble that does this, but if it's not done, then you can do it for your role, and it will be supremely helpful. BUT it is an advanced, advanced technique that needs real experience and training.

So, we do not really have any of those kinds of notes to share with you. Once a play is analyzed, it's really gone, and we start over from scratch if we do it again.

And this leads to the fact that you are reaching levels of questions and research that indicate you should attend training. Only ours will do SynthAnalysis as a major preparation tool, but others in Europe and Asia will cover a lot of Chekhov tools. You owe it to yourself to pursue this kind of advanced experience.

If you would like to see how Chekhov himself handled this analysis thing, you can read in a chapter in each of his main books, On the Technique of Acting and To The Actor. BUT, get another book, To the Director and Playwright, and you will not only find more detail about all this scene analysis, but half of the book is his own director notes on The Revisor, or Inspector General in Russian. This is an invaluable book available through most online bookstores.

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On Wed, Sep 12, 2018 at 11:56 AM,

Sir what is difference between realistic acting and truthfull acting.?  
Sir also explain higher ego?

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The BIG argument between the various acting schools over the last 100 years relates to realism versus impressionism, whether in art or acting. Is a character realistic, that is, does he act in the story exactly as he would act in real life? Does he use events from his own life to look like you might see him on the street doing what he is doing in the play/movie. Many Hollywood actors were trained this way, especially through the various forms of the Stanislavsky System, the Method, Uta Hagen, Meisner, and a host of off-shoots.

This argument began in the Moscow Art Theater in the late 1890s through 1920s, where Konstantin Stanislavsky began to explore the way to create a more honest portrayal on-stage than what was the norm at that time. He developed his early

system with tools (such as Affective Memories, As-If, etc.) specifically because he and his MXAT partners wanted to affect their audiences. Michael Chekhov was part of that process, but he did not believe that they should be trying to recreate real life on-stage, but rather he wanted to thrill audiences with deep feelings, spectacle, and imaginary worlds the characters could live in. This became the main "disagreement" between he and Stanislavsky, who loved him nonetheless. In time, Stanislavsky worked with Chekhov and others and came to believe much closer to what Chekhov was teaching. BUT, in Western countries, this evolution in Stanislavsky did not get out before they had already latched onto his earliest experiments. SO that's what they taught for the past 60-70 years.

Truthful Acting is not a specific term in the early years of actor training, but it's close enough to realistic acting to be synonymous. There are also, today, even within our National Michael Chekhov teacher groups, schools that use truthful acting to also refer to what WE (Chekhov) do, which is find the truth of a character through imagination and psychological gestures to be a more interesting, compelling character.

Higher Ego is a term Chekhov developed to refer to his highest sphere of imagination to get the characteristics for his characters. This comes from the psychological concept of ID, Ego, and Super-Ego. Freud was a big deal in the days of the early Russian theater guys, and Chekhov and Stanislavsky and the others really studied those concepts back then. Freud did not actually coin ego, id, and Super-Ego. Freud's actual terms for those are "the It", "the I", and "the Over-I" (or "I above")

So the earlier argument about imagination versus realism fits here too. Stanislavsky and others were tied into trying to develop the ego and id concepts, but Chekhov, Vakhtangov and others wanted to seek the Super-Ego, and even beyond that to Chekhov's Higher Ego. But the terms overlap some.

Research Freud, Ego, Id, and Super-Ego a bit and then read what Chekhov wrote about the Higher Ego. It has a spiritual connection than Freud's use of them to explain humans and human dysfunction.

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On Fri, Sep 21, 2018 at 6:20 AM,

Hello sir. If I find that my character's favourite colour is blue, his favourite sport is cricket. His home is made of wood. In past he has hit his brother with rod etc. How I will internalize this much details? If these things are in my head then how I will make it live in my body?

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You are thinking you must put this kind of information into your body. You do not. There is no way that an audience can see what you hold in your head unless you reveal it some way. How can you reveal in your body that you hit your brother with a rod? That is part of the backstory of your character, and maybe part of the given circumstances of the scene. But it's something only you will know unless it is revealed in the script. Just like an audience cannot know what you are feeling as the actor, unless you indicate it somehow, and that is usually when the director says, "you're indicating." That sounds or looks false.

The back story may be a way for you as the actor to develop the personality of your character. It may explain why he does the things he does or acts the way he acts. But it can only help you a little bit in becoming the character.

What will help comes out of your imagination of what your character looks like, how he holds himself, how he moves through the space, whether he pushes or pulls or gathers or reaches to get what he wants. It may be true that YOU, while knowing that he hit his brother with a rod, will help you understand what he wants in the scene, how far he might go to get it, and what kind of resistance he might encounter. This might help you imagine what he might do to overcome that resistance?

Chekhov says to not do any of the research of the backstory or personality traits until AFTER you have spent time imagining all the physical characteristics, body type, face structure, how he walks or talks or reacts to things that happen. Do that by closing your eyes for awhile and imagining your character physically appear in front of you so that you can see all those things. Imagine. THEN look at the script for clues to his backstory. IF you are doing a character from history, that is when you can research the historical facts. BUT remember you are not trying to render even a

historical character exactly. You are trying to create a representation of your character from your own imagination in this specific set of circumstances. You have the freedom to choose him as you see him. AND this is your artistic creation.

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On Mon, Sep 24, 2018 at 3:29 AM,

Sir please tell me what are the variations we can do with expansion and contraction exercise?

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Expansion and contraction are the most basic movements in life. Inhale, exhale. Tides in, tides out. Flowers open, flowers close. Birth, death. Wherever you look, listen or touch, even within your own body, there is Exp/Con going on all the time. This movement has no resistance - that comes with MFFR (molding, flowing, flying, radiating). So Exp/Con is a rhythmical, repetitive movement. What you can do, however, is to vary the size, speed, and visibility of those movements.

Use a scale of 0-10 with 0 being the most extreme contraction you can accomplish and then begin to expand out to 10, which is the most extreme expansion you can physically make. Reach the stars! Some natural expansions may be at the molecular level and others may be continental shifts.

You can also vary the speed you do them with. In nature, which Chekhov mirrors a lot, there are things that expand very quickly - think of a hummingbird's heartbeat - and others that are very slow - the seasons are exp/con of climates, the geological movement of the earth is on glacial timescales. Within your own body, there are very slow ex/cons, such as your digestive cycles, and very fast ones, such as the neurological operations in your brain. Some are very irregular, such as your brain waves, and others are very regular, your heartbeat. Play with all these variations.

Finally, you can do these totally internally (stand still and move nothing physically but allow your imagination to see yourself moving at the maximum you could do physically). We call this veiled, in this case, fully veiled. We always start out our physical work fully UN-veiled, that is with the maximum visibility of your physical action. After we get the physical movements down with all the variations mentioned above, then we begin to veil it. Think of veiling as putting a covering over a strong light bulb. The bulb always shines at the same bright intensity, but by putting a veil over it, you see less light. So, you imagine a veil covering your 100% physical effort so that someone who is watching would see less movement - but you are still doing the maximum ex/con you can do.

With these variations, there are two extremes, which are the maximum limits of your own physical ability, and an unlimited of intermediate steps. It's easiest to put it on an integer scale, like 0-10 or 1-7 or something that helps you imagine it, but there are many more in-between steps you could try. Never reduce your possibilities with any kind of limits. Always explore as much as you can.

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On Sat, Nov 3, 2018 at 10:29 PM,

Dear sir..

I'm doing one play here. I got a little part. I did preparation for my part but I'm unable to react truthfully to other characters. What should I do now?

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Tell me the play and your character. What did you make your character into?

*It's me and the director both said that you are not reacting truthfully sir.*

*They are saying I am saying lines with no variation, It's going flat.*

*I know my PG for whole scene. I'm doing and modifying it. But PG is not working. Now what should I do sir?*

Is it someone else who is telling you that you are not reacting truthfully, OR is it you judging yourself?

Are you reacting at all to other characters? If so, then that is truthful. the only untruthful reaction is NO reaction. Only you know how your character reacts. No one else can judge that because that is inside of you. IF another character yells at you, then you might look shocked or get angry and yell back or you might get scared and pull back OR you might not be intimidated by them at all and you might react with skepticism or even laugh at them. It's your character and only you can decide how to react.

Now if the script tells you how your character should react, ("Bob reacts with surprise and shock and runs to the door"), then you do that action and let your character decide how he feels about it. Scripts almost never tell a character how to feel - they sometimes indicate the action the character does in the reaction and you can imagine how he "felt."

IF it is the director who tells you that you are not reacting truthfully, then you need to ask him or her what they see, how they want you to react, more importantly what they want your character to do in that reaction. REMEMBER, the audience, the director, the other actors, only you, knows how you feel or what you are thinking. They ONLY see what you do. That is why Stanislavsky and every great acting teacher concentrated on what ACTIONS you play, not how the character or the actor feels.

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On Sun, Dec 2, 2018 at 10:34 AM,

Dear sir.

What kind of differences are b/w Meisner technique and Chekhov's technique?

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This is a very wide and complex subject. And it doesn't have a lot to do with how well someone can act. It's an intellectual academic discussion. BUT I'd boil the difference down this way.

Meisner is an entirely mental method. Although there are other things he teaches, Meisner is famous for one main skill to learn - RESPONSE. His training is primarily built around how you respond to another actor and how he responds to you. You'll spend a very long time working with a partner trying to learn how to respond "truthfully" at least in the eyes of the teacher. So, you'll stand there facing your partner and he will say something, and you'll respond with something. For many times you try this, your teacher will say it is not truthful. And you will keep trying it until you finally respond in a way the teacher thinks are "truthful." (By the way, this is a vast over-simplification of this amazing process, which you really do need to experience with a good Meisner teacher rather than a book.) There's that word truthful in quotes again. BECAUSE the audience never knows what "truth" is. They only know what they see, and in a stage play, it's normally only the large physical movements they see. They will never see you furrow your eyebrows and squint because you "feel" your character is sad. They may sit 50-80 feet away from you. ALSO, those who say you are not "truthful" are only trying to get you to respond to something hurtful that your acting partner says AS THEY, the teacher, WOULD RESPOND. That for them is "real" and "natural." But they are not the actor in that moment. It is your response that matters.

The key is that ALL mental work is purely mental. Meisner exercises were originally taught at schools that ALSO taught Chekhov, so Meisner knew you would leave his mentally driven class and go to a physical class where you would learn to put all that truthful response into your body. That was Chekhov.

Chekhov is primarily known for the physical tools that take the actor out of their head and gets them to act "truthfully" through their body. Now there is also mental aspects in Chekhov, but the difference is that Chekhov teaches the mental work comes through the imagination, NOT as it might be done in life with real people. He was more interested in the spectacle of acting, not trying to recreate everyday experience. AND he knew that the audience is not really interested in seeing a play with normal reactions. They want spectacle. They want to see people react wildly as if the character is unstable.

SO, I would recommend Meisner training for anyone, because what it does well is to get you to respond from within yourself in a way that does not sound rehearsed, planned, or previously known. And that is valuable. BUT some Meisner teachers are driven to ensure their future income by demanding that their teaching is the only thing you'll ever need. So, they easily get upset if they find out you are trying to learn other acting methods, and I have seen some of them get abusive with actors who do not respond the way they think they should. But not ALL Meisner teachers are this way. Look for someone who both teaches you AND builds up your confidence. Be careful and do not ever put up with any

abusive behavior from any acting teacher from any acting method. It's not worth it to you if you constantly feel bad about yourself. By the way, there are now schools that have re-combined Meisner and Chekhov methods in the same courses.

Chekhov training is open to all others. NMCA is highly inclusive. We see value in other methods. But you should get a strong physical basis in your body for acting, along with the self-confidence Chekhov builds in actors before you go off to experience other methods.

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On Tue, Dec 11, 2018 at 2:07 PM,  
Sir what is physical action of Stanislavsky?  
Is it like Chekhov's technique?

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The answer is, yes, but not nearly as developed as Chekhov did. It came later in his last published book and after a year or two of experiments with the System in the earliest days.

When Moscow Art Theater (MXAT) was started by Stanislavsky and Nemiro-Danchenkov, they had a goal to search for a way to consistent truthful acting. What they saw in almost all performance was that plays appeared staged, meant to try to show how the "star" of that show could really "act" like they were real, but it did not feel true, and audiences walked away feeling empty. And the system of theater was designed to make sure the "stars" would never get upstaged by other actors. So, all supporting characters were purposely directed to disappear when the star entered. BUT Stanislavsky could also see that there were a few actors in the world who seemed to be inspired to real acting that felt true to audiences. And when that happened, audiences were emotionally activated. He wanted that. The challenge was to find out how to make that kind of acting possible for all actors. How do you make every performance seem real? That was the goal of MXAT.

In the beginning, he focused all his efforts and the experiments with his colleagues (Chekhov was one) on how to create an emotional life. That was how they eventually came to the idea of using the actor's own inner personality to show pain and sadness. That became a huge thing across the acting world, and it became one of the things that he and Chekhov were known to "fight over." Chekhov did not believe in having the character's traits come from the actor's own personal traits. He discovered that using his imagination to create those character traits were better, more interesting, and safer.

In time, Stanislavsky also reduced his belief in the importance of emotional life in a character, but the earliest experiments had already been taken around the world and became the only thing actors were taught. In the meantime, because of Chekhov's own experiments and work at MXAT, along with a set of other actors/directors who worked there, Stanislavsky came to believe that action by actors on-stage was the most important thing. If you read his last book on acting, you will see how he really believed in much the same ideas as Chekhov.

By the way, "fights" between Stanislavski and Chekhov were always mischaracterized. They disagreed – didn't fight. MXAT and the System was a collaborative effort (not a teaching system) where everyone contributed ideas, they tried them in plays, and discovered what worked for each. Stanislavski taught Chekhov – Chekhov taught Stanislavski – and the other directors there did the same. It was an acting laboratory, not a school. Despite reported arguments, Stanislavski did say Chekhov was "his greatest student," instructed Stella Adler to seek out Michael Chekhov to take the next step, and it was Chekhov who got the moniker, Greatest Russian Actor.

This is a quick answer to a very large subject, but you should get the idea from this.

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On Thu, Dec 13, 2018 at 9:34 AM,  
Sir how many months we should give to prepare full length theatre production?  
Many directors are doing it in only 1 month or less than 1 month sometimes only 10 days is it good to prepare in 10 days? I have problems when we get less time for production?  
My director is doing in only 15 days I can't live character and understand script in 15 days

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You asked two questions. First, what is normal for the industry regarding rehearsals? Second, how do I work when a director only has a short time to rehearse?

In the days of Stanislavsky and Chekhov and the early companies, they would rehearse a year! In those days, they could, because they were all paid by investors and government and vast audiences who would pay top\$\$\$ to see shows. They might also play that show for months or a year. BUT those days are over. There are no big subsidies (\$\$\$) for theater companies. Unless it is Broadway or West End, shows cannot afford to play for years. And, outside of those big productions, audiences do not drive-up ticket prices.

Even with all that, many productions are forced to pay their professionals for non-productive (as in rehearsals) work and that can force a production company to get by with the least amount of rehearsal possible. In community and small professional theaters, it is very common for rehearsals to be a month or less. Your experience of 10-days is unusual, unless the play is a standard where everyone should know the characters and lines and directors can cast actors who probably already know the scripts. I know there are some Shakespeare companies around who have a week of intense rehearsals and then start the run. Often, the actors have either played the roles before and do not really need much rehearsal OR they just put a script coach off-stage and actors regularly call "line" to get the text they should say. BUT, of course, this puts a real challenge for younger or inexperienced actors who do not know the script.

So, it is much more normal now for shows to only get a month or less to rehearse. Does that mean it is a bad show? Not necessarily. I have seen many great shows that only had 3-weeks to rehearse. I have been in a few. It's normal around here for local theater.

In our main workshops, students have only 5-days to prepare their roles before a single-night performance. And they are consistently high-quality. We have an advanced workshop that uses only 4-days to start from scratch, to create a story idea, develop the show and the script, rehearse the story, and present it to a one-night performance. And it is always very high-quality, because we all use the Chekhov tools together and work together to do that.

The bigger question is your second one. How do I prepare a character in such a short time?

This is when training really helps you. The magic of Chekhov tools, if you know them so well you can use one or more naturally, is that you can create a very interesting complex character in an instant! It does not take a long time to prepare unless you are using any of several other methods. The magic of Chekhov is that it only takes ONE TOOL to create a character, and if you know them all somewhat, then using that one tool will activate the others and you will find that you will be using some of the other tools without any effort or preparation. BUT...

Therefore training with someone who really knows those tools helps you. In our training, we learn, practice, apply and understand each of all the tools on the chart, and then some extras as-well. So that you put them all into your toolbox and can pull one out when you need it the most. Is it always PG or Centers? No. Those are useful if you know how to use them, but you may find that a character only needs to know how to Push or Pull as an archetypal gesture to be interesting to the audience. AND that is what your job is as an actor.

Here is the difference in an amateur actor and a professional one? The amateur needs a lot of preparation to create a character and understand what the director needs you to do. The professional not only can create that character in the moment but can be consistent in delivering a quality character the same way every time. The director can always depend on the professional to do what is needed for that character without having to retrain them or use a lot of rehearsal time. SO, you have a goal of becoming a professional actor, then you need to teach your body and your mind to consistently make that character work for the story and the show. And you will need to learn to do that each time with very little rehearsal. Short rehearsals are becoming normal.

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On Sun, Dec 30, 2018 at 8:31 PM,

"Sir once you gave me example than. In animated movie characters can't feel and think anything they can do only actions same thing is for actors(humans) that they have to do actions to produce emotions on audience? "

This type of statement you gave sir - Will you please explain it in detail?

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If you take a piece of paper and draw a cute little animal on it, it will be a character on that page, just like a character in an animation or a cartoon. We draw teddy bears here. What do Indian children love as cuddly little animals? Now draw a big frown on its little face. What is that little animal feeling?

Nothing. It feels nothing. It is a piece of paper. But of course, if you show that little frowning animal to other people, especially children, they will say it is sad. But that little drawing on a piece of paper feels nothing. It is **THEY, the audience**, who **feel something**. They feel sad on behalf of that little animal. And artists are good at drawing pictures that **LOOK LIKE THEY FEEL SAD**. Animation artists also are good at making their characters look like they feel something, angry, sad, mad, hurt, happy. That is also true of the old cartoons that were made with clay to look like they could move and feel something. But they were clay - so they could not feel anything.

Animation art is drawn on a computer and then turned into movie footage. Those drawn characters and how they look are stored in computer memory and maybe on a digital file or tape. So, they are bits in computer memory. What do bits in computer memory feel? Nothing. But the animation artists are good at making them **LOOK LIKE** they feel something, and animation audiences are trained by culture and nature to respond to what they look and act like. The animated character does not feel anything. But you, the audience, responds to how they are drawn and how they act, and **YOU FEEL THE FEELING YOU THINK THEY LOOK**. Draw a frown and **YOU** feel sad. Draw a smile and **YOU** feel happy.

The same is true with real actors on stage, film, or TV. The audience cannot possibly read your mind. They cannot possibly know what you are feeling at any moment. What they can do is see your smile or hear you laugh and then **THEY FEEL** happy. They can see you frown or hear you cry, and **THEY FEEL** sad. They can see your angry face or see you strike out at someone or yell at someone and **THEY** anger or fear. **BUT** you can easily smile or laugh or frown or cry or strike out at someone on cue **AND** not be feeling any of those things yourself. If you are an actor on-stage especially, with other live actors, if everyone were to feel that way on-stage all the time, it would be very hard to have a good working stage for professional actors.

Our NMCA workshop is in Florida this week, right now, and we are teaching actors how to quickly enter a scene and laugh or cry or get angry or scared in a couple of seconds, do their scene, and then get out of it immediately. For the audience who watches, it looks like they are happy, sad, or angry. But that is only because they **LOOK LIKE** they feel something, **BUT** it is the audience empathizes with them. They think the character is feeling something and they feel it with them, but in truth the character is being created by actors who are feeling nothing, other than anxious about remembering their lines or nervous about being in front of a crowd of people.

**THE ACTORS DO NOT FEEL WHAT THE CHARACTER IS FEELING**. **BUT** they breathe and look and act like someone does when they feel those things. It is the audience who has to feel something in a show, and they get that from the story line and the characters scene situations and how they, the audience, relates to the story or feeling those things. **AND** there may be some common emotional reactions in the audience, but every single member of the audience has their own personal response to the story and the situation and feels whatever they feel differently from everyone else.

So, the main thing is that **YOU**, the actor, do not have to **FEEL** anything but you should learn how to look like you feel things. There are clear and ancient patterns in how people look and act when they feel sad or angry or happy **AND** you, the actor, can easily learn these in a few minutes and you can learn how to jump into and out of these in seconds when you enter and exit a scene.

**WITH ALL THAT UNDERSTOOD**, you, **THE ACTOR**, may feel something naturally when you do these patterns, when you do archetypal gestures or other Chekhov tools. Those movements sometimes trigger emotions naturally in you, the actor. **AND**, if that happens, then that is alright. There's nothing wrong with feeling emotions during a scene, if you, the actor, can stay in-control of yourself and remember your lines and do the stage business the director wants you to do. You, the actor, must keep control of your own thoughts and actions for you to do the practical things you have to do on a stage, or a film set. **IF YOU DO HAVE SOME NATURAL FEELINGS** and you can maintain control while feeling them, and they help your character look like they are feeling something, then that is also okay.

**BUT YOU, THE ACTOR, ARE NOT REQUIRED TO FEEL SOMETHING IN ORDER TO AFFECT THE AUDIENCE THROUGH YOUR CHARACTER**. If you look and act like you feel something, the audience will too and that is all that is required.

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On Tue, Jan 15, 2019 at 11:18 PM,  
Sir how to show our thoughts, feelings into physical actions?

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You do not. There's nothing you can do to make an audience know what you are thinking or feeling. IF YOU TRY TO DO THIS IN YOUR PHYSICAL ACTIONS, then that is what directors call "INDICATING." And they all hate that. It looks false. And if you have a director who is trying to make his show REALISTIC, then this is not what they want.

That does NOT mean that there are no thoughts or feelings in your actions. And some of those will be evident in your actions. BUT if you try to make the show thoughts and feelings, then it will not work. THE AUDIENCE LOOK AT YOUR ACTIONS, if you do something that is right and normal and natural for your character, and THE AUDIENCE WILL APPLY THEIR OWN THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS TO THAT ACTION. You do not have to do anything to make it happen. That is how audiences react normally.

This idea about "showing thoughts and feelings in acting" was how live theater used to be before Chekhov and Stanislavsky and all the others in the early 1900s. Actors would falsely show feelings through set, prescribed actions. Look at some of the earliest descriptions of how to be an actor. And they did some of that in the original Russian theaters. But Stanislavsky and all his students and fellow directors and teachers did not like that. It was not real or true or even interesting.

In *An Actor Prepares*, the 1st Stanislavsky book, he tried to find ways to change the way old actors did that. So he and his fellow teachers/directors tried to find ways to counter-act those false movements. That was where Affective Memory and other tools came from. AND those earliest tools were taken by some Russians to New York to teach to Strasberg and his fellow teachers at the Actor's Studio. BUT this was wrong. Those Russians who went to NY left too early and got stuck in the Moscow Art Theater's very first experiments. In time, Stanislavsky's group discovered that those methods were not the way to make that work. When you study Stanislavsky's 3rd book, he had disavowed his earliest ideas about how to create truthful theater and, instead, had found that ACTION is really the only thing an audience will ever see. So by that time, he had already changed to pushing actors to focus on doing truthful actions, not worry about truthful thinking or emotions.

Chekhov had discovered much earlier that action is truth and emotions cannot be known by an audience. He fought Stanislavsky about this for decades. And Stanislavsky eventually agreed with him. In fact, Stanislavsky told Stella Adler, who had grown up in Strasberg's Method, that Strasberg was doing it wrongly and that she should look up Michael Chekhov, because he was doing it right.

If you have read any of Chekhov books or studied his lessons, indicating thoughts or emotions as an actor does not work. You may well have thoughts or feel things while you are acting, but the audience may never see them. And, as an actor, YOU DO NOT HAVE TO THINK OF ANYTHING, OTHER THAN YOUR LINES AND ACTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS AND YOU DO NOT HAVE TO FEEL ANYTHING, OTHER THAN WHAT YOU MIGHT FEEL NATURALLY. But your feelings do not matter. It's the audience who must feel something. AND they do that on their own.

Often, when a director says you need to feel something, he really means that you need to be able to cry on-stage and make it sound natural. This is a common requirement in acting, and you need to learn how to do it. What we teach is that you already know how to cry, and it does not have to come from feelings. You already know how to fake laughing. Just imagine something funny right now and start laughing. Quickly you will begin to feel the power of that laugh, which is an action you are performing, and you may then begin to laugh more spontaneously. Laughing is a series of breaths. Start with a very long inhale and then let out a series of short exhales. Crying is the opposite breathing pattern. Take in a very short inhale and then let out a series of long exhales. It sounds and looks like crying to the audience, and they will not care what you are thinking or how you are feeling or why you care crying. With practice They will think you are crying and that is all you need to tell the story.

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On Fri, Feb 15, 2019 at 11:06 PM,

What are the differences between good actor and great actor?

Because after using Chekhov's tools we can become good actors but what will make us great actors

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Good and great are judgement words. Who decides what is great versus who is good? Who is a model actor you would choose as a good actor and who would be a great actor? The fact is that everyone wants to be great at whatever they do, but most everyone ends up being good (or maybe bad). Wanting to be a great actor is a good thing to do but remember that you have no control over being good or great, because those titles are decided by other people.

You can seek to be a good actor through training, rehearsal, and practice. You might become a great actor by being inspired to play a role in a unique way and by becoming well-known for that. BUT you cannot control the terms good or great, because those are the words others will use for you and that often has more to do with popularity than quality. There are popular actors called great, but who are not particularly good. But being popular is ephemeral - it can come and go in the same minute.

I would use different words that are more in your personal control. And you will know when you meet these titles.

A **reliable actor** is someone who will always do their best preparation for every role they play. He will learn and know how the production environment works, so that if he is playing a stage role, he will understand how he fits into the character, how he can best serve the vision of the author and the director, and how he can get himself focused and high-energy for every performance. If he's cast in a film, he does all the same things for stage, but also learns and understands all the special requirements and procedures the film crew must use to make a film. In other words, the director and producers can always rely on him doing his best job for them. That is an actor directors like to hire or cast.

An exceptional actor is someone who goes beyond reliability to search for the deepest meaning in their role, who rehearses and practices alone to find every possible nuance in their role. One way to do this is to learn, practice and know all the Chekhov tools which are designed to help an actor discover these nuances and characteristics. Other tools might help also, such as Sanford Meisner's exercises. An exceptional is so committed to their craft of acting that they train constantly, exercising their physical gifts and learning to control their tools.

You say that "you can become good using Chekhov tools." Keep in mind that Michael Chekhov is universally known as THE GREATEST RUSSIAN ACTOR, which goes back to the late 1800's. My training partner has talked to people who were alive then to see him act and 80-years later cried when they remember his performances. Was he great? Well, he always used his tools and constantly refined them.

So, you must answer a question about your own acting. Do you want to be known as good or great by people who do not see the work you really do, but only see a performance, and who will always change their mind as soon as someone new comes along? Or would you rather be a reliable and exceptional professional actor who directors love to cast and hire because they know you will always give them the best and most reliable work you can offer? IF you go for the reliable and exceptional, then good and great may come along too. But even if it does not, you will be employed and earning money doing what you want to do most.

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On Fri, Mar 22, 2019 at 7:02 AM,

Sir how to act like I'm having headache, cold, hot, back pain, fever, burning finger, any disease like cancer, how to show audience that I have just wake up using Chekhov's tool?

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You are asking HOW to do your ACTIONS.

This is where your Creative Individuality comes out to play. The script or Director says you should feel miserable, due to problems you may have. Those could be disease or injury or a relationship breaking up or a lot of other things. Think about what makes YOU miserable. How does that look? Of course, you do not watch yourself when you are miserable, but you do watch others. How do they look?

But you are deciding here HOW to perform an ACTION. No one will know how YOU feel. They will look at your action and imagine in their own minds how your character might feel. They will interpret what your actions mean to them. SO, HOW do you do those ACTIONS?

Is your director wanting it to look like "real" sickness? If so, then what does real sickness look like to them? I would suggest that there is no such thing as a real look for sickness. Every person on Earth has their personal way of looking sick. We each have our own threshold for pain and how we act when we reach that threshold is unique to us. BUT there are some archetypal actions that appear in many people who feel sick. And you see those on TV. Otherwise, think about your own family or girlfriend or even a close friend. Can you usually tell when they might feel sick? If so, what does that look like to you?

So, a headache is very hard to show IF it is a normal stress headache that is all in your head with no outward signs. A mild headache does not usually show with anyone - you must tell someone you have one. With this, there are a few subtle moves you might make with your hands and body. Your eyes are a little closed because you avoid light. You might wince from noises because they seem too loud. I know that I sometimes hold or rub the area oh my head that hurts. It seems to help. And that can be seen.

NOW if you upgrade that headache to a migraine headache, then that always has observable outward symptoms, which include the ones we talked about, but also include real sickness, nausea, pain in the body, throbbing head pain that makes you hold your head and put it under the covers.

Back pain is normally very visible, and you may not have had much of this at your age. Especially if it is lower back pain, it affects your whole body, so you simply stop everything you are doing to find the most STILLNESS to avoid that pain. It is excruciating. If you do not move, you do not hurt. Do you go to bed? I do. When my back hurts, everything else stops until I can stop that pain.

Fever is an internal feeling - you are hot all over your body. You can't show that unless it causes you to sweat heavily or makes your skin red. But fever sometimes creates visible symptoms that can be seen. Heavy Sweat. Your whole body feels extra-sensitive, so you try to be quiet, still and avoid the aching in your bones. What if you have a cold or flu? Of course, then you feel headache symptoms and body aches, but you also are coughing, with blocked nose from snot, and this affects your voice and how you react to others. You cannot hear well with a cold or flu. So that affects how you interact with everyone around you. Imagine that difficulty with communicating with your family and friends. Act that.

Sometimes you must imagine what something looks like in order to create that physically. Observe what someone looks like when they really feel sick, not what they look like on TV. Why do I say that? Because how someone looks on TV is their act - it is THEIR CREATIVE INDIVIDUALITY. They're not sick. So whatever they do to look sick is THEIR IMAGINATION. If you try to do that, you're just copying them. It is not what everyone looks like, and probably not what you look like. BUT, of course, they may also be acting the archetypal sickness actions. If that's okay with your director, then maybe that is what you need to do. But it will not be YOUR CREATIVE INDIVIDUALITY. It will be theirs.

One of the things that is not written much about in Chekhov's or other books is OBSERVATION. But it is part of most every actor training system, even if they don't say it. Chekhov said to observe life. Look at other people, animals and nature doing things. How do they look? How does that look change when they're feeling sick? Even a sick tree looks and acts differently. Is that something you can imagine for yourself?

When you get into that acting moment when you're supposed to look sick, use Chekhov's Imaginary Body tool. Imagine what your character looks like when they feel sick. How does their overall Personal Atmosphere change? Define your symptoms (outward actions) in detail based on your imagination. Embed that investigate your mind as you begin to act and then forget what you look like -- simply do those actions. Forget what you "feel." Just let that imaginary body of the sick man create the image of you reacting to those symptoms. You feel hot. Your head hurts. Your nose is running. You

talk funny, you can't hear, you don't want to look at anyone, you just want someone to put you to bed, rub your chest and go to sleep. Those actions make you look sick.

There's also ATMOSPHERE. What is the atmosphere in your house when someone is feeling sick? It can be overpowering to everyone who comes in, even if they don't feel sick. It is like the symptoms of the sick person leaks out into the room and everyone feels that. So, imagine that atmosphere is in the space where you are acting. Let that imaginary atmosphere invade your senses. That will make your actions more intense.

AND THIS WORKS FOR ALL ACTIONS you might need to do in any performance. Imagine the body of your character who might be feeling whatever it is the script or director wants to see. Embed that into your imagination, along with the atmosphere of those symptoms/actions.

You may get the WHAT of how your character is supposed to FEEL and you may be told by script or Director what ACTIONS they want. But, remember above all things, your CREATIVE INDIVIDUALITY tells you HOW you do those ACTIONS. How you act when you are feeling sick is your job - not theirs. And if they say they want some other actions to show that you are sick, then they are saying to you that ARCHETYPAL GESTURES are important to them. They are not interested in "REALITY."

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This exchange represents a smattering of the myriad questions new actors have about the process of acting, their desire to become good at it, and the differences in all the myriad of teachings available to learn. I had many of these same questions in my first year of exploring my artistic adventure. My answers to these questions come out of my deep dive into acting methods being taught 15-years ago, but my perspective comes from my 15-years studying Michael Chekhov's practices and teaching with NMCA, [National Michael Chekhov Association](#), and being the Executive Producer of that organization since 2010. BUT these responses to his questions are not an official answer by NMCA. In fact, I did not engage my partners through this year. Both Lisa Dalton and Wil Kilroy, Master Teachers of Michael Chekhov tools and co-founders of the NMCA, would likely have answered the questions with a different approach. Along with their original Trio partner, Mala Powers, they had an almost direct link to Chekhov.

My answers are directly from my personal understanding of the acting process through my own personal integration of all that I've learned, which is a hallmark of the NMCA Way – learn the tools, the practices, the observations, and the practical applications of Michael Chekhov's amazing mind, and then integrate those with your own experience. You will create "Your Own Method" that can sustain through whatever your goals in theater may lead you.

Some may suggest that the young man's questions were "too simple." In fact, in their simplicity they evoked a deep thought to provide an honest answer, rather than a planned canned marketing response. If this appeals to you, then you will find NMCA's Michael Chekhov Intensive workshop revealing, evocative, and motivating. Check it out.

#### Editor's Note:

1. I did some minor edits to this stream of emails to (1) satisfy my spell-checker's penchant for correct English, and (2) to clear up the minor extra-word superlatives one often adds to emails when responding quickly. I DID NOT change the young man's questions, other when email ran words together. His Indian English was left intact.
  2. I did not name him here because I didn't discuss publishing this with him, so I don't have permission to use his name. BUT I am deeply indebted to him for his honest questions which sparked my deep thought to answer them.
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